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Dearest René

I've been thinking a lot about you & am terribly sorry for not writing once since I saw you last November & now its nearly the end of Aprille with his shoures sote. How are you? I wonder if you can get hold of to read an essay by Nora K. Chadwick called Intellectual Contacts between Britain & Gaul in the Fifth Century. It is chapter VIII in a book called Studies in Early British History, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954. I tried to get a copy for you some years back but the bloody thing was out of print then. Only I think you might ask a copy from Cork University or somewhere. It's an interesting collection of essays altogether, but this one on these Gallo-Roman contacts with Britain and Ireland in the 5th Cent — (& for that matter probably in the later part of the 4th) ~~to~~ touches on a matter of exceptional interest and has been terribly neglected especially by English scholars. It is becoming increasingly evident that Gallo-Roman refugees went direct by sea (well naturally!) to southern Ireland and to south-West × north-west Wales. The evidence is only to be found in obscure fragments & chance references — perhaps just the name of a person or some slight indication of one sort or another — very little direct evidence from Welsh deposits, evidence of a more substantial nature from Continental writers & from certain early Irish sources.

I'm saying this not only from what Nora Chadwick has to say, but from other bits of things that I've read since reading her thing some years back.

This influence is not confined by any means to monastics ~~but to~~ or strictly Xtian matters, but also secular literary conventions & that not. Properly and exhaustively examined

N.B. not read any of this through so heaven knows what rot it contains — but must get to post. D

P.S. Have you come across a chap called Jacques Ellul, a Bordeaux professor of History & Sociology? He is a protestant it would appear of some sort — a leader in the French Resistance in the last war & very interested in the Ecumenical ~~movement~~ movement. Anyway his book called The Technological Society, translated in American but published last year, 1965, by Jonathan Cape I've just read. It's an exhaustive investigation into the modern phenomenon of the 'technological' as such in any sphere of human activity. In one sense it is basically up my street as expressed in Art & Sacrament, but it is with the whole positivist materialist thing is wholly futile & is concerned only with perfecting methods, but he doesn't so much as mention the central opposing notion of 'sacrament'. He has written another work called La Présence in which he sets out his religious views — but what they are I do not know. It's an important work, but I don't much like either his tone or voice — for example, while I have the gravest doubts about Teilhard de Chardin, he was so obviously great a mind & very a man that I don't like Ellul calling Teilhard's stuff 'in the realm of fancy & chaos, no bearing on reality far & without substance'. It's disrespectful in a way, & dull either, even though I by no means agree with & follow Chardin, in so far as I can understand him.

(2)

it seems to me ~~[illegible]~~ that ~~of~~ something amounting to a new pattern would emerge – only as Nora Chadwick rightly says this would require research of a specialized nature by chaps of all sorts I mean one would have to be thoroughly familiar with all those late Latin writers such as Ausonius and Sidonius Apollinaris & lesser known blokes, also a thorough acquaintance with Early Welsh – both language & archaeological fragments, also with all the Irish deposits and a lot more besides – chance remarks from chaps of all their late Roman world & saxon.

~~[illegible]~~ People – English historians especially, have created a pattern of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain closing the Dover – Calais route & then the Southampton – le Havre route, the flight of British refugees from ~~the~~ the south & south west coast of Britain to Brittany was taken as natural, but thalassic journeyings the other way, from the coast of late or sub-Roman Gaul direct to Ireland and also to the Bristol Channel & to Caernarvonshire never occurred to chaps, tho' such seems certainly to have been the case.

It's full of most interesting possibilities. For one thing, as you know probably far better than I, though 'Druidism' as a cult was very early totally suppressed in Gaul by the Romans*, in a certain way some of it continued 'underground' and ~~the~~ during the Imperial period famous Roman 'rhetoricians', ~~very very~~ were very frequently Gauls and people like Ausonius mention chaps whom ~~were~~ they knew, very cultivated literati, who ~~[illegible]~~ were of the 'druidic' tradition.* Anyway, one way or another there is evidence of highly sophisticated Gallo-Roman chaps (including high class girls) in certain districts in Gaul – & it would seem that some of these in face of the bloody confusion of Visigoths Vandals, ~~[illegible]~~ & other Germanic invaders 'took an ocean trip' but not 'in a government ship' to find refuge in Ireland & also to western Britain. But it is more of the influence on Irish literary forms that is bloody interesting. Kuno Meyer, in a lecture in Dublin in ~~1911~~ 1912 appears to have

and of course in Britain that's why in A.D. 60 they went straight in to Anglesey to exterminate the cult there, because chaps from Gaul used to come to Britain to be trained.

* I don't mean that these chaps bore any resemblance to the order of druids of ~~[illegible]~~ four centuries previous – in Caesar's time. but were ~~[illegible]~~ part of the Romano-Hellenistic culture but retaining, ~~[illegible]~~ things from the Gaulish-Celtic tradition. ~~so~~ were grammatici & rhetorici. The Irish called rhythmical composition (not metrical poetry) retorics according to Meyer, & this in turn is come from what Sedulius in Gaul calls rhetoricus sermo.

③

known something about this, and I imagine you could get hold of a copy of that lecture. I've never seen it, only seen it referred to.

~~[illegible]~~ The Kuno Meyer paper is called Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century (published in Dublin in 1913.) And the German Celticist, Professor Zimmer, left some unpublished papers giving interesting information of Irishmen (monks) on the continent a good bit earlier than the ~~[illegible]~~ 6th or subsequent centuries when we know they abounded. Mansuetus bishop of Tours in the middle of the 4th Cent is said to have been ~~[illegible]~~ an Irishman or Irish rank.

But what I wanted to tell you was an example of literary 'formula' as it were coming through from ~~[illegible]~~ Classical convention in Gaul & affecting ~~[illegible]~~ Irish-Celtic & Welsh-Celtic prose-tales. It is pretty astonishing just this one example. I'll give them in reverse order — you know my favourite Welsh tale 'Culhwch & Olwen' when it describes Olwen, the giant's daughter, coming in - and it says roughly that she was dressed in a flame-red gown of silk ~~[illegible]~~ and round her neck was a torque of ruddy gold & pearls & rubies set in the torque. Her hair was more yellow than the broom-flower and her ~~[illegible]~~ skin was more white than wave-foam, her fingers & the palms of her hands were white as the marsh-trefoil that shoots up from the fine gravel of a stream ~~[illegible]~~ welling up [at its head-waters]. Not the eye of a mewed hawk nor any eye of a falcon thrice-mewed, nor any eye was fair bright as hers. The breast of the swan was ~~not~~ less white than her two breasts, her two cheeks were ~~[illegible]~~ ~~more~~ red ~~[illegible]~~ than foxgloves*. That is in a 13th Cent Welsh MS but is known I think to be a redaction of a much earlier ~~an~~ version — 9th Cent it is reckoned.

Now, in a much earlier Irish tale called 'The Courtship of Ferb' this occurs: 'Long, curling & yellow was his hair. Proud and glowing were his eyes, blue, clear as crystal. Like to the foxglove of the mountains

*The Welsh word used is ffion, ~~it really~~ ~~means~~ it's a masculine plural noun meaning red flowers, but is always used of foxgloves. In Lady Guest's Mabinogion it's translated 'roses', but that's quite ~~[illegible]~~ wrong. Valerie's second daughter is called Ffion (pronounced fee-on) told me she would call the child, if it was a girl, Ffion because she, Valerie, although no one had been called Ffion before she said she was sure she had seen it somewhere. So I said, well, I'd never heard of it as a Welsh proper name.

I think in modern Welsh it would read Oedd cochach y dau rudd nag ffion — not certain by any means.

But that it ~~sounded~~ rang some bell in my stupid head & then I looked in the Welsh text of Culhwch ag Olwen & there it was with reference to Olwen's cheeks, spelt in Middle Welsh (which is a sod to make out) Oed ~~[illegible]~~ (were) Kochach (redder) y (the) deu (two) rud (cheeks) nog (than) fion (foxgloves)*

that gave me an awful twisting to make out because in Modern Welsh 'cheek' would be grudd and I had forgotten ~~that~~ in Welsh the noun following a numeral remains in the singular, thus 'one man', 'two man' etc. ~~[illegible]~~ Also when I looked at rud I thought it was the older Welsh form of rhudd = 'red' so for a while I couldn't make it work. I also forgot that by a rule of mutation the g would be lost.

was each of his cheeks. You might fancy that a rain of pearls had fallen into his mouth & that his lips were twin branches of coral. White as new fallen snow of the night was his neck, and such was the fashion of his skin."

The ~~[illegible]~~ translation is that ~~[illegible]~~ of A. H. Leahy (London, 1902)

Now here is what Sidonius, (60 at Lyons AD 430) ~~say~~ writing of the ~~[illegible]~~ Visigothic leader, Sigismer, says:

"With charming modesty ... went on foot amid his [mounted] bodyguard and footmen, in flame-coloured mantle, with much glint of ruddy gold, and gleam of snowy silken tunic, his fair hair, red cheeks & white skin according with the three hues of his ~~equip~~ equipment.

Bloody interesting is n't it. The literary convention ~~[illegible]~~ in the 5th Cent. highly cultivated Gallo-Roman, describing that famous Visigoth & the recurrence in the Irish ~~[illegible]~~ description of the ~~[illegible]~~ bridegroom in the Courtship of Ferb & recurring again the much later Welsh description of the bride, Olwen, can't be accidental, can it.

Another thing noted by Kuno Meyer in the same paper is b a 12th Latin MS at Leiden, it is apparently a glossary of Latin words, but it contains the following with reference to events of the ~~[illegible]~~ 5th Cent period of the invasions of Goths, Vandals etc:

"All the learned men on this side the sea fled away and in transmarine parts, i.e. Hiberia, and wherever they betook themselves, brought about a very great advance of learning to the inhabitants of those regions".

~~The~~ Mrs Chadwick says that Kuno Meyer found this reference ~~in the~~ among the papers of Professor Zimmer after the latter's death.

Anyway I thought it might interest you and that you might be able to get in Ireland this Kuno Meyer publication of 1913.

Another thing which Nora Chadwick mentions

in this ~~hisperic~~ 'hisperic' ~~stuff~~ Latin which developed
in the 5th & following century in which all sorts of
Greek, Hebraic, Celtic & all sorts of word-forms were
used. There are extant four copies of ~~no book~~ a work
called 'Western Sayings', (Hisperica Famina)
She says that everything suggests that the original
version was made in Ireland or in Britain.

My interest in this is that in the middle of
World War II, that remarkable man who was
Keeper of the V & A. Mus. – Sir Eric McClaggan
(can't spell it) asked to come & see him, his
son had just been killed in the Air Force
(I think) & it happens that he (the son) was
very fond of In Parenthesis, & his father wanted
to see me & tell me about it & also ask me
about the book. During dinner he asked me if I
had studied or knew about these 'hisperic'
writings of the sub-Roman centuries as he had
read some of them at Cambridge. (he was
himself learned in a very unobtrusive way)
and thought that Joyce & perhaps myself
had been influenced by them. I, of course
had never heard of them – & he said
well, not many people have, but he thought
them very interesting and had tried to persuade
students of literature to study them.

Well, long after that, in 1952 or 53 I
had a letter from Tiger Dawson who said he
had enjoyed The Anathemata, and ~~asked me if~~
said he supposed I was writing in much
the same way as the hisperic Latin of
the ~~[illegible]~~ period of the break-up of the
western imperium. You know how the Tiger
took it for granted that one has read
everything from Chinese classics of 500 BC to
Racine ~~or~~ or Sexton Blake or Lewis Mumford
or Einstein or Ethel M. Dell. Well, I
wrote to him ~~saying~~ saying, no I was
afraid I had only heard of hisperic
Latin & that was all. But I thought
it interesting that both Xtopher D. &
Sir Eric Maclaggan both supposed a
possible connection between the stuff
& the Hisperica Famina.

There's hisperic Latin → I have seen references
to by academic scholars once or twice
who make no bones about their irritation –
saying of some chap of that period
'mercifully he escaped the absurd
bastardized obscurity of the 'hisperic'
writers' – that sort of thing.

⑥

Must stop. So much I wanted to say. Must get some of these newly published books on the Easter Rising 1916. Have read my reviews of some of them. There was a wonderfully good 3rd programme thing ~~last~~ a few days ago, with the descriptions of some of the survivors. It was ~~indeed~~ incredibly interesting. The astounding bravery of the chaps — unconscious bravery & in every case with equally astonishing humour — it's like nothing else I can think of. I was particularly struck by an incident when one of the chaps involved at an absolutely crucial juncture missed a train because the clock in some place in Dublin was five minutes slow & when he managed to get back in great misery at having lost his train, all the other bloke said was 'And does not everybody know that that clock has been five minutes slow for as long as can be remembered'. I can't quote the exact words. But just said casually as though it were a bit of a joke. I just can't conceive an Englishman or a Frenchman, & certainly not a German!, or, for that matter a Welshman, taking it like that, can you?

Been re-reading, a number of times, just lately John Collier's 1935 novel *Tom's A'Cold*. It is a terribly interesting book. I wonder what happens to Collier. No one now has even heard of *Tom's A'Cold*.

Can't seem to get *anything* done. Write millions of letters & stuff — bloody deeply worried still about all this Church thing. I can't get it right any more. At moment have a kind of cist ~~or~~ something on my bottom — same place as I had it about 18 months ago. Also a bit of a 'Knashing great bounder of a tooth'. That thing Tom Kinsey wrote in *The 20th Cent.* review in July 1960, called *Reconnoitring D.J.* is by a *very long way* the best thing ever written about my stuff. I've just re-read it. & also the one in *The Studio* just after my Tate Exhibition. I am grateful to you. Can't write more now, — a lot of boring stuff to see to & no inclination to deal with it. Can't seem to express *anything* any more. Some bloke wants me to contribute to the thing called *Mid-century Authors*, — it's American & a sort of *Who's Who* but with the chaps themselves writing their own bit about themselves. Like a bloody fool I promised I would contribute then I forgot about it & now they want it & I simply can't do it briefly — or for that matter at length. I slaved all day yesterday & the day before trying & it's already eight pages of foolscap — & no use. I suppose the only thing to do is to go on & send the stuff & let them pick out the bits they want — but it's such a bore & sheer waste of time. Poor Helen S. is very ill. in a hospital at Windsor, Nikky G. wrote to me yesterday telling me about it. Helen does not know how ill she is. Anyway Nikky has asked me either to go over to Windsor or to write a letter to Helen. which I've now got to try & do, I mean write. Well, God bless you. Write when you have time. Love to Joan & Rosalind & Robin. & of course to you.

Dai.